

Student Abstract

Author: Sara Wright

Program of Study: MPH

University: Emory University

Title: Student Interactions with the Emory Institutional Review Board: The 2005 Global Health Department Summer Experience Survey

Abstract: For most students in the Hubert Department of Global Health, the summer following their first year of graduate work at the Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH), Emory University, is used to complete a public health practicum. Before conducting research, they obtain Emory Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. During the summer of 2005, the Emory IRB was undergoing many administrative changes. Concurrently, RSPH faculty and students experienced difficulty in their interactions with the IRB. This study aimed to characterize students' interactions and perceptions of the IRB in order to identify ways to prevent future problems. In October 2005, an online survey was used to document students' experiences. Of 76 potential respondents, 69 (90.8%) students completed the survey. Fifty-one students submitted proposals to the Emory IRB between the months of March and July 2005. Twenty-four (48% of 50) were unsatisfied with the process. The chief factors associated with dissatisfaction were (1) the length of time between protocol submission and IRB approval (average 58 days), (2) not having approval before departure to the field (52%), and (3) a lack of responsive communication from IRB staff to students (39%). Ten students felt the IRB process impaired their ability to conduct their research project. To improve student satisfaction with the Emory IRB, IRB should seek to complete an initial protocol review in less than four weeks, students should submit proposals to IRB at least six weeks before scheduled departure date, and IRB should be more responsive to communication from students.